The Christian Moderator;

OR,

PERSECVTION FOR RELIGION CONDEMNED;

By the { *Light of Nature.*
Law of God.
Evidence of our own Principles.

JAMES 2. 12.

So speak you and so do, as they that are judged by the law of liberty; for they shall be judged without mercy, that have shewed no mercy.

Mille hominum ſpecies, & rerum *diſcolor* uſus,
—— per me equidem ſint omnia protinus *alba*.

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PERSECUTION

Perſecution for Religion condemned, &c.

WHen I conſider how tenderly our Saviour Chriſt recommends the precept of mutual love to all that profeſſe his Name, making it the Character of his followers, *By this all men ſhall know that you are my Diſciples, if you love one another*, *Joh.*13.35. And when I reflect how highly the great Apoſtle *Paul* exalts the ſame commandment, abridging into this one precious ſyllable, the whole duty of a Chriſtian, *All the Law is fulfill'd in one word, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf*, *Gal.*5. I cannot ſufficiently wonder, to ſee moſt Chriſtians in this preſent age with fire and ſword perſecute each other, only upon the account of Religion: how are we degenerated from the primitive Believers, who would rather have given their own lives, to perſwade their enemies to piety, then ſought to take away the lives of their Brethren, to force them to Hypocriſie?

Yet hath it pleaſed the Lord Chriſt in our dayes, *upon whom the ends of the world are come*, to infuſe the like tenderneſſe into the breaſts of many conſcientious and godly-minded people of this Nation, (who ſeeing the deformity and unreaſonableneſſe of thoſe cruel Maxims, that preach ruine and deſtruction for the leaſt difference in belief) ceaſe not to pray unto the God of heaven, and ſollicite the Governors of the earth, that an impartial freedome and abſolute incoercencie in matters of Religion may be firmly and irrevocably eſtabliſhed, for all that profeſſe the Goſpel of Chriſt.

For encouragement of which holy deſigne, woven out of the the bowels of mercy, and for determent of thoſe tempeſtuous ſpirits, that with thunder and lightning ſtrive to ſtorm mens conſciences, I have endeavoured in this ſhort Diſcourſe to demonſtrate, That Conſcience-perſecution amongſt Chriſtians is clearly repugnant to the *Light of Nature*, the *Law of God*, and the *Evidence of our own Principles*.

Demonſtrative Reaſons againſt forcing of Conſcience.

1 SInce we have ſo happily ſhaken off that intollerable Yoke of Popiſh infallibility (*which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear*) it is become to us not only tyrannical, but abſurd, to compel others to a way, that our ſelves conſcile may poſſibly be erronious, we ſee one Parliament repeals thoſe Articles of faith which a former enacted; that form of worſhip which the Laws of the laſt age introduced, is now generally exploded; nay, the very laſt Reformation, ſetled with ſo ſolemn a Covenant, and carried on with ſo furious a zeal, is already by better lights diſcovered to be meerely humane, and therefore deſervedly laid aſide: The late Synods Confeſſion of Faith (hatch'd by ſo many years ſitting) is now learnedly examined, and indeed for a great part ſolidly confuted, by Mr. *W. Parker*, and other learned perſons in print; how prepoſterous is it then to conſtrain a ſoul, not onely to forſake his conſcience, which may be truth, but drive him contrary to his own heart, to a way that may be errour!

2. Since the Word of God is the ſole rule of Faith, and no humane authority ſo highly impowred, as to bind up our aſſents to whatſoever interpretation it ſhal pleaſe propoſe; it clearly follows, that as all the children of God have equall intereſt in the Teſtament of their Father, ſo no one amongſt them has any right to impoſe a force upon the judgement of his brother: One holds Baptiſm of children to be neceſſary, another eſteems it unlawful, a third denies both theſe Opinions, admitting well that it may, but not that it muſt be done: they confer Texts, look into Original Tongues, pray inceſſantly to God, and profeſſe ſolemnly the ſincerity of their intentions; yet after all their diligences and devotions, ſtedfaſtly remain in their former perſwaſion; Truly for my part, he that ſhould adviſe perſecution in ſuch a caſe (unleſſe his fire brought light too with it, to demonſtrate the truth) would ſcarce ſatisfie my ſuſpition, that his coals were fetcht from the infernal pit.

3. If we reflect upon the difficulties that encounter us in the way to truth, for *ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the path*, and withall conſider the ſhortneſſe of our ſight, for *here we ſee but in part, and underſtand but in part*: there will appear more reaſon to endeavour the mutuall aſſiſtance and ſupport, then malicious ruine & deſtruction one of another. However, ſince all have neither equal depth of natural judgment, nor the ſame meaſure of ſupernatural illumination, *but the ſpirit bloweth how and where it pleaſeth*; we ought not to attempt ſo high a preſumption, as to deſpiſe or perſecute our brother for his innocent and blameleſſe miſtakes, leſt we be found to fight againſt God, who is the free diſpoſer of his gifts; we know *the way of man is not in himſelf*, Jer. 10.23. but his *ſteps are ruled by the Lord*, Pro. 20.24. and therefore certainly, did we bear a due reſpect to God, we would be content to wait his leiſure, who has engaged himſelf by his Apoſtle, *Phil.* 3.15. *If any man be otherwiſe minded, God ſhall in time reveal even this unto him*; let us therefore entertain ſuch an one, who proceeds in the ſimplicity of his heart, with *milk*, till he grow ſtronger to digeſt *ſtrong meat*.

4. All compulſion upon the Conſcience returns us flatly to our old ſlavery under the *Prelates*, nay more to the implicite faith of the *Papiſts*, with this only difference, that we are worſe then either, becauſe our conſciences accuſe us of doing that which we condemn in others; for whatſoever I am conſtrained to ſwear or profeſſe more then I am convinced of proceeds from as great a tyranny as the High-Commiſſion, and is as blind an aſſent, as can be match'd in the groſſeſt Popery, and dare we *think that doing the ſame things we judge in others, we ſhall eſcape the judgement of God*, Rom. 2. 3.

5. Force is puniſhment, and conſequently not juſt, unleſſe the offence be voluntary: but he that believes according to the evidence of his own reaſon, is neceſſitated to that belief, and to compell him againſt it, were to drive him to renounce the moſt eſſential part of man, his reaſon. Why ſhould we be commanded *to try the ſpirits*, 1 Joh. 4.1. *to prove all things*, 1 Theſ. 5. 21. If there be not a faculty in the ſoul to judge for her ſelf? why are we enjoyned to *hold faſt that which we find to be beſt*, if after our moſt ſerious and deliberate election we ſhall be whipt out of our conſcience by penalties? To what purpoſe do we preach poor ſouls into juſt ſo much liberty of Scripture, as may beget their torture, and not permit them to reſt where they find ſatisfaction; Either prohibit to ſearch at all, or leave us ſenſible of ſome benefit by teaching: To believe what appears untrue,

ſeems

ſeems to me impoſſible; to profeſſe what we believe untrue, I am ſure is damnable

6. As it is certain, whoſoever ſwerves from the dictate of his Conſcience commits a grievous ſin, *Rom.*14. So without queſtion they that endeavour by force or artifice to draw any man to profeſſe or act contrary to what his ſoul believes, are as deeply guilty of the ſame crime. *When you wound the weak conſciences of your brethren, you ſin againſt Chriſt*, 1 Cor. 8.12. How dangerouſly then do they expoſe themſelves to the juſt indignation of God, who by Oaths, Impriſonments, Forfeitures, &c. both drive others, and fall themſelves into eternal perdition? How deſperately do they attempt to exſtinguiſh the light of Nature, which indiſpenſably obliges al men to deal with others, as they would be dealt with themſelves, a light placed by God in clear and candid ſouls to ſhine and guide them, but in black ones to condemn and burn them. I ſhall cloſe this diſcourſe with the advice of the Apoſtle, *Rom.*14.13. *Let us therefore uſe our judgement rather in this, that no man put a ſtumbling block before his Brother.*

2. *Unanſwerable Texts of Scripture againſt coercency in Religion.*

NOr are theſe ſo excellent and important truths built onely upon the firm foundation of ſolid reaſon, but alſo upon the infallible authority of evi- Scripture, 2 *Tim.*2.24. &c. *The ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that are contrary minded, if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themſelves out of the ſnare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will*: And another Apoſtle forbiding us to condemn one another, ſaith (*James* 4. 12.) *There is one Lawgiver, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy: who art thou that judgeſt another?* And in *Paul* to the *Romans* 14.4. *who art thou that judgeſt anothers ſervant? to his own Maſter he ſtandeth or falleth, yea he ſhall be holden up, for God is able to make him ſtand; one man eſteemeth one day above another, another eſteemeth every day alike; let every man be fully perſwaded in his own mind, haſt thou faith? have it to thy ſelf before God, happy is he that condemneth not himſelf in that which he alloweth*, that is, whoſe cenſcience inwardly accuſeth not his outward profeſſion. The ſame moſt zealous Preacher of the Goſpel returns ſo condeſcending and moderate an anſwer to a caſe of a far harder ſound then we undertake to maintain, that it ſufficiently proves he took his gentle pen from the ſoft wing of the *Dove*, 1 Cor.7.12.&c. *If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and ſhe be pleaſed to dwell with him, let him not put her away; and the woman that hath a husband that believeth not, and he be pleaſed to dwell with her, let her not leave him, but if the unbelieving depart, let him depart; a brother or a ſiſter is not in bondage in ſuch caſes, but God hath called us to peace; for what knoweſt thou O wife, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy husband? and what knoweſt thou O man, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy wife? as God hath diſtributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, ſo let him walk, and ſo ordain I in all Churches.* What can be ſaid more efficaciouſly to oblige Chriſtians, in charity and meekneſſe to forbear one another, then ſo expreſſe an Injunction of ſo great an Apoſtle, to live peaceably even with an Infidel? and again 2 *Cor.*1.24. He denies that even the Apoſtles themſelvs have any ſoveraignty over the Conſcience, but only Commiſſions

ſions to aſſiſt the conſcientious, *not that we have* (ſayes he to the *Corinthians*) *Dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy*; therein exactly obſerving the Orders which Chriſt gave to his Apoſtles, *Go and teach*, not compell, *and if any one receive you not, ſhake off the duſt of your feet*, not trample upon them, as duſt under feet, *Mat.* 10. 14. Conſtant to which Doctrine of Meekneſſe, our Saviour thus inſtructs his Diſciples, Mat. 23. 9. *Be not called Rabbi* (that is Maſters in ſpiritual matters (*for one is your Maſter, even Chriſt, and all you are brethren.* To this belongs the patient forbearing the *tares*, and letting them grow together with the *wheat* till the time of harveſt, as alſo that admirable preſident of mildneſs towards the Samaritans, who refuſed to receive even Chriſt himſelf, whereupon the Diſciples *James* and *John*, would immediately command fire from heaven to conſume them, as in the daies of *Elias*, but our merciful Lord rebuked their zeal, with this ſweet and tender reply, *You know not what manner of ſpirit you are of, the Son of man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them*, Luk. 9. 54. which one example abundantly ſatisfies all objections drawn from the practiſe of *Elias*, *Jehu*, the ſons of *Levi*, &c. in the Old Teſtament, for as they had an expreſſe command from God to warrant their Zeal, we have an expreſſe warrant from Chriſt to command us meekneſſe. If any one ſhall ſtuffle in a ſuſpition, that this moderate temper was meant only for the times of perſecution, when the Chriſtians had no temporall Power; let him firſt confeſſe that thoſe were the beſt and pureſt times, and then ſhew a Warrant dormant under our Saviours hand (that is in his Goſpel) to Commiſſionate his Diſciples as ſoon as they ſhould get the ſword into their hands, to cut the throats of all diſobeyers, and I ſubmit; but if they can cite no ſuch authority, let them freely acknowledge that perſecution for Conſcience is an unwarrantable tyranny over the juſt priviledges and liberty of a Chriſtian.

3. *Our own Principles againſt conſtraint upon the Conſcience.*

COnſonant to theſe reaſons and clear Texts of Scripture, are the Principles of all the godly and well-affected of this Nation: to begin with them to whom we ow this liberty of diſcourſing, the unparallel'd Army, in all whoſe proceedings, and Declarations (eſpecially ſince managed by the prodigiouſly ſucceſsful hands of the two later Generals) their *Motto* has bin *Liberty to all tender and oppreſſed Conſciences*, the glory of which ſo dazles the eys of our enemies, and encourages the hearts of our friends, that notwithſtanding whatever other diſadvantage, we ſtill find the Author of our Victory mindfull of the *word*, which himſelf gave to our Army, *The meek ſhall inherit the Land*; of which ſhort Texts written in our Enſigns, we may read a clear and perfect Commentary in the Propoſals of the ſame ſtill triumphing Army. 1 *Aug.* 1647. when penetrating exactly into the true ſtate of the Queſtion, they prudently diſtinguiſh between quiet exerciſers of their Conſciences, and active prejudicers of the Commonwealth, and thereupon offer their earneſt deſires, *that all coercive power, and all civil penalties for non-conformity be wholly repealed, and ſome other proviſion made againſt ſuch Papiſts as ſhould diſturb the publike peace.*

Many and wonderful are the deliverances which our good God has diſpenſed to his ſervants, in reward of this their inclination to mercifulneſs; yet amongſt all the glorious appearances of the Lord for his people, none can be found more

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eminent then the renowned victory over that rigid and ſevere Kirk-army of the Scots, *Sept.* 1650. who declining the mild counſell of our Saviour, *to poſſeſſe their ſouls with patience*, deſervedly loſt their lives by violence, a fatal argument, deciding manifeſtly this very controverſie in favour of meekneſſe, where the maintainers of compulſion were no leſs ingeniouſly then cruelly confuted, whileſt aſſuming to themſelves a Power to force our ſouls, they could not ſo much as defend their own bodies.

In memory of which great Salvation from the pride and fury of the *Presbyterian Prieſthood*, the Parliament, as a new Covenant of Thankſgiving for ſo ſeaſonable a mercy, in the ſame moneth enacted an aboliſhment of divers rigorous and penal Statutes, contrived on purpoſe by the haughty Prelats, to break the hearts of thoſe, whoſe conſciences they could not bend, which one Act has won more hearts to acknowledge and love the authority of the Parliament, then all their ſtupendious victories have forced bodies to confeſſe and fear their Power; and if it be not check'd by limitations and partiality in the execution, will render them abſolute Maſters of all that underſtand their own felicity: for what can be imagined more welcome to a Chriſtian people newly delivered from an Antichriſtian bondage, then to ſee themſelves infranchiſed into a holy Liberty of proceeding ſincerely, according to their conſciences in the Worſhip of their God?

Wherefore as we are full of joy for ſo excellent an Act, by which (as the Apoſtle ſaith) *we are called unto Liberty*, ſo we are full of hopes to be perfectly happy, by the free & univerſal obſervation thereof, without the leaſt ſelf-intereſt or reſpect of perſons, being ſo conformable to the conſtant received Maximes and ſolemn deliberate profeſſion of the Parliament, as appears by the *Declaration* of the *Lords and Commons*, in anſwer to the Scotch papers, 4. *Mar.* 1647. where *folio* 43. *the Diſcipline of Eccleſiaſtical Cenſures, and all other puniſhments for matters of Religion are diſclaimed, as grounded upon Popiſh and Prelatical Principles, not to be revived under any image or ſhape whatſoever*: and a little after *folio* 63. they proceed in the ſame ſenſe, *we ſhall not be afraid at the day of Judgement, that we have been more forward to ſet Chriſt at liberty, then to caſt him in priſon, it being better in our opinion (where the caſe is not very clear) to leave God to deal againſt many errours, then to uſe his authority for the ſuppreſſing of one truth; the weapons of faſting and prayer, being both more Chriſtian, and more available in ſuch caſes, then thoſe of force and violence*; and yet more fully (if poſſible) in another *Declaration* in anſwer to the letters of the *Scots Commiſſioners*, 17. *Febr.* 1648. *As for the truth and power of Religion, it being a thing intrinſecall between God and the ſoul, and the matters of Faith in the Goſpel being ſuch as no natural light doth reach unto, we conceive there is no humane power of coertion thereunto, nor to reſtrain men from believing what God ſuffers theirs judgements to be perſwaded of.* Words of that ſolid weight and precious value, as deſerve to be ingraven with letters of gold, and religiouſly obſerved for ever by all tender conſciences, as an Oracle.

Conformable to the aforeſaid Principles, is that excellent Doctrine and adviſe ſet down by Mr. *Parker* and his Brethren, in their *Examen of the late Synods Confeſſion of Faith*, in theſe words; *page* 128. *Liberty of Conſcience may be infringed, firſt by ſeeking by violent means to alter conſcientious mens judgements,*

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and their present perswasion; for it is the office of him who is the Lord of Conscience, to lighten and change mens minds, when and how he pleaseth, *Phil.* 3.15 Let us therefore as many as be perfect be thus minded, and if in any thing you be otherwise minded, God shall reveal this unto you.

2. *By inciting another by like forcible means to will and to act against his Conscience, and much more by imprisonment, mulcts, terrours or threats,* Rom. 14. 15,20,21. *For this is to make him destroy his soul,* vers. 20.23.

3. *we may not disturb the peace of mens Consciences, or make their hearts sad with our invectives, or menacing them causlesly with terrours from the Lord,* Ezechiel 13.32. Because with lies ye have made the hearts of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad, &c. And in page 230. thus, *But we would not have you assume to your selves, or attribute unto others, a Power to Lord it over mens Faith and Consciences, especially when men walk obediently towards those that are in places of Rule and Authority, and live a godly, sober, honest, peaceable, and unblameable life. If men will do wickedly, and defend a Liberty in Christ so to do, let them be lyable to the Sword of Justice for so doing. But far be it from us, so much as by example, to draw a weak brother, a Saint and fellow-servant of the Lord, whom no man can accuse, but for his differing judgment, to do any thing against Conscience, whereby he should condemn himself, as the Apostle speaks,* Rom. 14. *How much more ought Governours to be tender and abstemious in the use of violent and coercive means, to precipitate men into such perillous and destructive courses. All authority is given of God for mens welfare, and much more for the preservation, and not the destruction of the soul.*

By these considerations (I conceive) is clearly demonstrated the freedome of a Christian soul in her commerce for heaven, which since the mercifull bounty of God holds forth indifferently to all, the cruel covetousnes of man ought not to obstruct to any, surely it is the worst of *Monopolies* to lay Impositions upon the way to Paradise; Christ by his death, removed the Angel that chased from thence our first parents; and shall any of us take the Flaming Sword into our hands, to sheath it in the bowels of a poor Pilgrim, who with a sincere heart travails to the same Countrey, onely because he goes not in our company? In my *Fathers house are many Mansions,* saies Christ, why may there not be as many paths that lead to them? If *they that have no Law, shall be judged without the Law,* certainly they that unblameably mistake the Law, shall be tryed according to those Expositions which appeared unto them, to be the meaning of the Lawgiver, (for the sense is the Law, and not the letter) specially having so gracious a Judge, who hath already declared by his Apostle, 2 Cor. 8. *If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.*

Wherefore let us not by a suddain violence break into pieces the consciences of our brethren, but mildly thaw them into a cordial and ingenuous unity, that righteousnes and peace may flow together in the same channel, and not as broken Ice dash one against another: let us patiently expect, till the Lord be pleased to take off the vail from their hearts that are otherwise minded, and not by forcing their judgements, add to their vail of ignorance a worser of hypocrisie; it being now a common experiment, that generally the issue of compulsionary and forced conformity closes in this, to make some few counterfeit *Protestants*, and a great

great many reall *Atheists*; whence it is clearly concluded, that the only true means of winning soules to God, is the Gospellary way of meeknesse and perswasion: and indeed it may worthily be esteemed the prime miracle of *Christianity*, that a person so humble as our *Saviour* appeared, without the assistance of Kings and Princes, without the enchanting words of mans wisdome, without the affrighting threats of fines, imprisonments, and deaths, (though all these were absolutely subject to his pleasure) should conquer Powers and Principalities, should out-charm the Magick of humane eloquence, & by the admirable successe of his mildnes, condemn all those politique Religions, that confesse their own crazines, by using cruelty to support them: whereas to reduce the disobedient only with the spirit of gentlenes, and admonition, or at most desertion, argues indeed a Divinity in the Author, and a Purity in the Ordinance: and here we may fitly apply the words of our Lord, John 14. *If it had been otherwise, I would have told you*; if the way of planting my Faith had been by imposing penalties on the hearers, and not rather by exposing the Preachers thereof to dangers, I would have told you: if the means of preserving Religion had been by watering it with the bloud of refusers to embrace it, rather then of those that sought to propogate it, I would haue told you either by my example (all the world being in the power of my Deity) or by my doctrine, all justifiable proceedings concerning the government of my Flock, being derived from the warrant of my Word. Thus we see our gracious Law-maker, faithfull and constant to his own Principles, *The Son of man came not to destroy mens lives, but to save them*: Thus we see our own duty to *learn of him, for he is meek and humble of heart*; *let us not therefore judge one another any more, but use our judgement rather in this, that no man put an occasion to fall, or a stumbling block before his brother*, Rom. 14.13. Let us alwaies remember the advertisement which the beloved Disciple gives to all his fellow-servants of the Lord Christ, John 13. 16. *The servant is not greater then his Lord, if you know these things, happy are you if you doe them.*

Of tender Consciences.

THese few unpolisht *lines*, which I here present for incouragement of tendernes, I desire may not be *stretcht* to draw in a wild and extravagant licentiousnes, since they aim no farther then to hold up a Liberty to such only as professe Christ, and walk before the Lord in the integrity of their heart, who by the following marks are easily discernable from all those that for their blasphemies in Doctrines and debauchery in manners are worthily excluded from the benefit of this Indulgence.

Supposing first, as confest by all understanding men, that tendernes of Conscience is not the same thing with truth of judgement, (else there could be but one only kind, because truth is but one) but it signifies a proceeding *bonâ fide*, without sinister respects, or dissimulation, seeking before all things to know God, and fearing above all things to offend him. And secondly, since in our enquiry, to whom belongs so honorable a title, we cannot pierce into the inward thoughts of men, we must give sentence as they appear to us, which rule in cases of this quality is in it self sufficiently certain; however, 'tis the onely means God hath allowed our nature to guide her resolutions in the judging of others.

The signes then of tender Consciences are these: If they lead regular, vertuous, and peaceable lives; If their Opinions be not justly accusable of self-interest or licentiousnesse, but rather require of them a prudent and religious severity against the inclinations of corrupted nature; If their judgments be steddy, not fann'd to a new sense with every breath of wind; If they continue in the same perswasions at their death, which is no time for dissembling, at least we ought to judge so, if they not only die in their Faith, but for it, not only give away good part of their estates charitably, but suffer all to be taken away patiently, and all this for Christs sake, or (to speak more closely) for that which they believe to be his will and commandment, no higher testimony of a true and real sincerity can possibly be given, or easily imagined; and whosoever doubts after such evidence, (chiefly if many concur in the same way) deserves to be condemned, as the most passionate, malicious and uncharitable person in the world; for though one man may value his fancy above his life or estate, yet it is very neer an absolute impossibility, that many (especially if they be discreet and rational in other negotiations) should agree to undo themselves for a meer conceit, did not they seriously believe, it more imports them to keep their Faith, then lose their Fortunes.

By these rules we may easily conclude the admission of those pious and religious persons, who were imprisoned and persecuted by the late Prelates, into the number of tender Consciences; as also those precious servants of the Lord, who by a voluntary banishment left their friends and country, to plant the liberty of the Gospel amongst the savage Heathens of *America*.

Whilst I was finishing these lines, a worthy friend of mine came to honour me with the civility of a visit; to whom reading these last two or three considerations, he told me, that as he believed the Characters I had given of a *tender Conscience* were most evidently true, and to all unbiased-minds perfectly satisfactory, yet they were appliable to a sort of people in this Nation, whose being discountenanced, is thought so profitable to the State, & so pleasing to a certain froward part of the Ministery, that he feared my Reasons might encounter some opposition, unlesse they met with very ingenuous and disinteressed Readers; plainly telling me, that the measures I had cut out for tender Consciences, would fit the *Papists* as well as if they had been made for them, For who live more peaceably with their neighbours, (sayes he) who deal more justly with all men then they? who are more constant in their Religion, and more scrupulous in the observances of their Law, then they? who suffer for their Faith, more then they; nay, at this time, who besides them? They submit their understandings to the definitions of their Church, and their wills to the obedience of its Discipline, in Fasting, Confession, and many other burthensom duties, all which are very disagreeable to the Dictates of flesh and blood, as containing the real practise of the highest self-denial that can be imagined: And for the serious hour of death, I must confesse, I have known many of us turn Papists upon our death-bed, but never in all my life so much as once the contrary; and to speak ingenuously, I have often observed, that they who go from us to them, seem (which you make the only judge) more spiritual, retired, and devout, then before they left us; whereas of the Papists that become Protestants, (besides the worldly designes they may easily be thought to have) most commonly they grow more licentious,

both

both in Faith and manners, especially the Priests, who seldome or never are converted, if once past the age of marrying.

I, who had alwaies believed the punishments laid upon them, were reducible to civil crimes, though defended by them as Points of Religion, resolved to follow those so certain and evident Principles, which I had already framed (for discerning of tender Consciences) whithersoever they should lead me; and therefore desired my friend to bring me to the knowldge of some moderate and discreet Papist, that I might examine their Tenents, not doubting their easie exclusion from the priviledges of tender Consciences: this my Friend immediately did, recommending one to me, a morally honest and understanding man, though (saies he) a little abused in his Religion, and a great deal for it; After we had met, and agreed to discourse with all freedome, the *Recusant* began with a short story of the present sufferings of *Papists*; whereof (he said) *Some are sequestred for Delinquency, and those of all Cavaliers* (exteris paribus) *the most severely, though of all the most excusable, because wholly depending upon the pleasure of the late King, and infinitely obliged to his Royal Lenity; noting it as an unanswerable argument of their fidelity and gratitude toward such as deal with them in mercy, as also that their declining to receive the oaths of* Supremacy *and* Allegiance, *for which they have heretofore been so violently persecuted, proceeded not from any aversion to civil obedience, but because there were mingled in those Oaths certain expressions of a pure Spiritual nature, repugnant to their Consciences, and altogether unnecessary to the common security.*

Others are equally punished, that is, their whole estates sequestred, allowing only a fifth part for their wives and children, though in true reason they are altogether justifiable, having never been in any Engagement, but found onely in some Garrisons of the King, whither they were driven for refuge, being put out of the protection of the Parliament by publique Proclamation, their houses every where rifled, their goods plunder'd, and lives endangered by the souldiers, whose condition seems clearly to be within the equity of that Article of the Armies Propositals, Aug. 1647. That the Kings menial servants, who never took up Arms, but only attended on his Person, according to their Offices, be freed from Composition; *much more those who had both the civil reason of duty, and the unanswerable argument of necessity, to plead for their discharge: And* (which is yet more hard) *some Recusants of this Classe, who never bare Armes, but were onely found in Garrisons, for their own personal security, as aforesaid, are now rank'd among the highest Delinquents, and their estates to be sold, such are Sir* Henry Beddingfield, *Mr.* Bodenham, *Mr.* Gefford, *&c.*

As for the single Recusants, two thirds of their estates are seized upon, onely for the cause of Religion, under which notion are included all such as were heretofore convict of not resorting to Common-Prayers, *or do now refuse the Oath of* Abjuration, *a new Oath made by the two Houses, when the former kind of service was abolisht, wherein the practise is strangely severe; for upon bare information, the estate of the suspected is secured, that is his rents, &c. suspended, before any tryal, or legal proof, even in these times of peace, and being once thus half-condemn'd, he has no other remedy to help himself, but by forswearing his Religion, and so by an Oath a thousand times harsher then that* Ex Officio, *they draw out of his own mouth his condemnation.*

when the Sequestrators have thus seised into their hands two thirds of the most innocent Recusants lands and goods, then come the Exchequer-men, Taxgatherers, and other Collectors, and pinch away no small part of the poor third penny that was left them; so that after these deductions I have known some estates of three hundred pounds a year, reduced to lesse then threescore, a lean pittance to maintain them and their children, being persons for the most part of good quality, and civil education: And as for Priests, it is made as great a crime to have taken Orders after the rites of their Church, as to have committed the most hainous treason that can be imagined, and they are far more cruelly punished then those that murder their own Parents.

Besides these extreme and fatal Penalties that lie upon the Recusants meerly for their Conscience, there are many other afflictions whereof few take notice, which though of lesser weight, yet being added to the former, quite sink them down to the bottom of sorrow & perplexity; as their continual fear of having their houses broke open & searcht by Pursuivants, who enter at what houres they please, and do there what they list, taking away not only all the Instruments of their Religion, but oftentimes Money, Plate, watches, and other such Popish Idols, especially if they be found in the same room with any Pictures, and so infected with a relative superstition.

Another of their afflictions is, that they, I mean these single Recusants, have no power to sell or mortgage the least part of their estates, either to pay their just debts, or defray their necessary expences, whereby they are disabled for all commerce, and their credit being utterly lost, (upon which many of them now provide even their daily bread) they must needs in a short time be brought to a desperate necessity, if not absolute ruine; and if any, the most quiet and moderate amongst them, should desire to transplant himself to a milder Climate, and to endeavour to avoid the offence that is taken against him in his own Country, he cannot so dispose of his estate here, as by Bill of exchange, or any other way, to provide the least subsistence for himself and his family: A severity far beyond the most rigid practice of the Scotch Kirk; for there (as I am informed) the persons of Recusants are only banish out of the Kingdome, and prohibited to reside at their own homes above forty dayes in a year, which time is allowed them for the managing of their estates, and their estates allowed them for their maintenance abroad: A proceeding which their Principles would clearly justifie, if they could justifie their Principles. But in England, where compulsion upon the Conscience is decryed as the worst of slaveries; to punish men so sharply for matters of Religion, contrary to the Principles publikely received, is a course that must needs beget over all the world a strong suspition and prejudice against the honour and reputation of that State, which at the same time can practise such manifest contradictions.

To this deplorable condition (said he almost weeping) are the English Catholiques now reduced, yet they bear all, not only with patience, but even silence; for amongst the printed complaints so frequent in these times, never any thing hath been seen to proceed from them, though alwayes the chief, and now the sole sufferers for their Consciences, except (not to be altogether wanting to themselves) some modest Petitions humbly addressed to the Parliament, though such alh been their unhappinesse, that more weighty affairs have still disappointed

their

their being taken into consideration; else were they admitted to clear themselves of the mistakes and scandals unjustly imputed to them, they would not doubt fully to satisfie all ingenuous, and unpassionate men, nay even whomsoever, that were but moderately prejudiced against them.

To this I answered, that as every one sees the severity of the Penalties which Papists suffer, so for my self, I believe the tenderness of their Consciences, because they suffer: and upon this ground we see our Judges and Committee-men allow Deeds, where they find clear proof of a valuable consideration. But Idolatry, and the destructive Principles concerning Civil Government, seem to me the two points that are *onely* and *altogether* intolerable in that Religion.

Whether Papists be guilty of Idolatry in the Question of Angels, Saints, and Pictures.

THe Papist here first took for granted, which indeed I could not deny, that if any Opinion be probably true, persecution in that case is certainly unlawfull; because otherwise both sides, for both are probable, if one be, might justifiably persecute one another, to the utter destruction of all Society; and after returned this answer to my first objection.

We reverence indeed (saies he) *the Angels and blessed Saints, with a respect far more then we use to men, because far above their Dignity, but infinitely below the adoration we give to GOD, because infinitely below his excellency. All the mistakes in this controversie arising from hence, that the language of men hath more distinctiveness and variety then the gestures of their bodies, and yet is far lesse copious then the thoughts of their minds; whence it is they so frequently apply to most different conceptions the self-same words and postures of body, as the titles of* sacred Majesty, most High, most Mighty, *given to Kings and States, the stile of* Grace *to Dukes and Archbishops, of* Lord *to Noblemen, Generals, Ambassadors, &c. of* Worship *to Gentlemen of quality, and such as bear any considerable Office in the Commonwealth; so kneeling to Parents, standing bare to the Parliament and other Courts, bowing to one another, &c. All these very expressions are the same we use towards God himself, and pass innocently, when rightly understood; but to a scrupulous and wilful spirit, how offensive would this one word* Worshipfull *be, if he reflected with a little rigor and frowardness upon it? Now as every old woman has capacity enough to make a different apprehension betwixt going to speak with one at the* Lion *in* Cheapside, *and going to see the* Lion *in the* Tower; *so may any the most simple Catholique in the world, by a very little teaching, learn to distinguish the* Crucifix *which he sees in the Church, from* Christ *whom he believes to be in Heaven; and consequently in no more danger of committing Idolatry to that Picture, then the other of fearing to be torn in peeces by the Sign.*

Upon this Argument of the Papist, I call'd to mind what I had read my self in Scripture, how the Prophet *Balaam* fell flat upon the ground, and adored an Angel, *Num.*22.31. and *Joshua* gave the same honour to another, that stiled himself *Captain of the Lords Host*, and therefore could not be the Lord, *Jos.*5.13. nay he was commanded yet farther, to *put off his shoes, because the ground*

was

was holy, by the presence of an Angel; these examples, I confess, being related in the Bible, without the least note of reproof, enforce us to admit several degrees of worship, infinitely differing in the intention of the minde, though very little in outward expressions; now by whatsoever names we *Protestants* shal agree to call this behavior of *Balaam*, *Joshua*, and even all the Jews before the Ark and Cherubins, I see plainly will fully express, and shrewdly justifie (at least from Idolatry) all the approved practises of the Papists, which truly cast up, as far as I can discern, amount to no more then a reverence towards Saints and Angels, suitable to the excellency of their State; and for Churches, Altars, Pictures, &c. only to an Ecclesiastical kind of good manners. And by the Light of Nature thus far seems to me evident, that all honour or dishonor done to the Image reflects upon the Principall, since not one amongst us but would condemn him for a Malignant, that should shoot at my *Lord Generals Picture* without *Temple Bar*, and if any should reprove him for his temerity, we would presently conclude such person wel-affected to the present Government, and not at all sequestrable for *Idolatry*, unless we could prove that the abused and doting people superstitiously adored the painted cloth, which kind of worship, I am satisfied, no Recusant gives even to the Picture of our Saviour.

Lastly, I think it probable, not certain, as the Papists do, that the second *Commandment* intends not to forbid any such inferiour spiritual civilities; because wise Governours contrive their Laws against those vices, to which they see their Subjects particularly enclined; and therefore downright *Idolatry*, by offering Sacrifice to Gods made with hands, and reposing confidence in their assistance, being the common sins of those times, 'tis probable we ought to interpret this *Precept*, as a provision against Heathenish Idolatry, not against such kind of reverences as the Jewes by Gods own appointment used before the Ark and Cherubins.

Agreeable to this, is the Opinion of the learned Mr. *Hobs* in his *Leviathan*, where *fol.* 360. he affirms, that *to worship God in some peculiar place, or turning a mans face towards an Image, is not to worship the place or Image, but to acknowledge them holy, that is to say, set apart from common use; for that is the meaning of the word* holy, *which implies no new quality in the place or Image, but onely a new relation by appropriation to God, and therefore is not Idolatry. But to worship God, as inanimating or inhabiting such place or Image, is Idolatry; as also to worship God, not as inanimating or present in the place or Image, but to the end to be put in mind of him or some of his works, in case the place or Image be dedicated or set up by private authority, and not by the Authority of them that are our soveraign Pastors, is Idolatry: For the Commandment is,* THOU SHALT NOT MAKE TO THY SELF ANY GRAVEN IMAGE.

Thus in my judgement doth that learned *Protestant* absolutely clear the Papists of Idolatry, though perhaps he had more precisely exprest this last way of transgressing the second *Commandment*, if he had call'd it *will-worship* rather then *idolatry*, because there is only a want of Commission, no excess in the degree of reverence: And though afterwards he condemn praying to Saints departed, as Idolatry, yet it is only upon a particular supposition of his own, that there is yet no such thing as Saints in heaven.

When I had read this passage of so famous an Author to the Recusant, he to requite

requite my civility, immediately shewed me the words of the *Counce' of Trent*, which he said differed nothing at all from Mr. *Hobs*, and very little from me: For as I thought, that the exhibition of some inferior kind of reverence towards Churches, and other instruments of piety, was probably unforbidden; so that Councel decrees the absolute lawfulnesse thereof, in the 25. *Session*, where to the Canon concerning Images, are added these words of explanation: *Not that there is believed any divinity or vertue in them, for which they ought to be worshipped, or that they are to be petitioned for any thing, or any confidence ought to be reposed in images, as of old was done by the Gentiles, who placed their hope in Idols, but because the honour exhibited to them is referred to the Prototypes they represent, that so through the Images, which we kisse, and before which we bare our heads and kneel down, we may adore Christ and venerate his Saints.*

Upon occasion of which words, the Papist assured me, that in no Councel is used the phrase of *Religious worship*, when they treat of these questions, nor any thing concerning them commanded as necessary, but only their lawfulnesse declared, that such as find benefit by their assisting the memory, or exciting the affections, may safely use them, the rest may let them alone, provided they censure not the practise of others, over whom they have no jurisdiction, nor condemn the judgment of the Church, who has jurisdiction over them.

And hereupon we both agreed in this collateral observation, That if all modern Controvertists would restrain their disputes to positions generally received as of Faith in the Church, of which they are members, attending only to her expressions, and not to the terms of particular Writers, the differences amongst Christians, so fatal to the peace of *Europe*, would be both lesse numerous, and far more reconcileable.

Whether Papists be guilty of Idolatry in the Eucharist.

BEfore we could proceed to the second part of this Question, the Recusant upon some occasions was obliged to go into the Country, whence he sent me this following paper:

Since it is concluded between us, that Probability exempt from persecution, I shall endeavour to prove that the Real presence of our Saviour in the Eucharist *is at least a probable Opinion; and in order thereunto, cite the most expresse and direct terms of the holy* Scripture, *as first the promise of our* SAVIOUR, Joh. 6. 5. The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world; *and* ver. 55. My Flesh is meat indeed, and my Bloud is drink indeed. *Secondly, The performance of that promise, in the words of Institution*, Take eat, this is my Body; *punctually repeated by the other three Evangelists*, Mat. 26. 26. Mar. 14. 22. Luk. 22. 19. *And thirdly, the places declaring the use of this Sacrament in the Apostles time*, 1 Cor. 10. 16. The Cup of blessing which we blesse, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the participation of the Body of the Lord? 1 *Cor.* 11. 29. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lords Body. *Thus the great Apostle* S. Paul, *and all the four*

foure Evangelists unanimously teach the Doctrine of the Real Presence, and not one single place produceable that in direct terms cals the Eucharist a signe or figure of Christs body, notwithstanding the maintainers thereof, admit no proof as authentical but the precise text of Scripture; yet in this so important controversie they flie to Logical inferences and Philosophical discourses, and so make their own reason the Judge, and not the word of God, rendring by their new and private interpretations this great Sacrament inferiour in dignity, not only to the Paschal Lamb, *a type of Christ, but even to* Manna, *which was but a figure of this very mystery.*

Surely, if we shall add to so many and evident texts of Scripture, the constant judgment of the Fathers, and the universal practice of the whole Christian world for above a thousand years (since so long is acknowledged the absolute reigne of our Religion) we may safely conclude the Doctrine of our Saviours presence in the Eucharist to be at least probable, and consequently Catholikes in no wise accusable of rashnesse or obstinacy, in believing a Position so effectuously recommended unto them.

But admitting the Doctrine of non-reality to be true, (said the Lener of the Recusant) *yet ought not Catholikes to be judged guilty of the sin of idolatry, because their adoration is not intentionally directed to any creature, but to the Person of Christ our Lord: and if He be not there, their worship is mistaken in the place, not in the object, and therefore at most an errour of fact, and no formal Idolatry, which no temperate Judge will impute unto sin, much lesse our mercifull Redeemer, who came to save, not to destroy, who accepts of the good meaning of his servants, though mingled with humane infirmities, as when* Abimelech *mis-took* Sara *from her husband, being informed by* Abraham *that she was his Sister; the sincere and conscientious King received absolution from God himself, upon this account, that he did it* (*saith the text*) *in the simplicity of his heart Gen. 20. 6. which seems an expresse and infallible decision of this Controversie, that men may be unhappy by being deceived, but are not guilty, unlesse they deceive themselves.*

This kind of reasoning prevailed somewhat the more with me, because the Apology of the *reformed Churches* of *France*, expressly approves it; saying, *if an Apostle had by mistake adored some other man resembling Christ, when he lived on earth, his errour would have excused him, Daille chap.* 11. As on the other side *Mary Magdalens* not adoring Christ, when he appeared to her in the habit of a Gardener, *John* 20. 15. was never accused as a defect of devotion; wherefore since the Papists all professe not to terminate their adoration in the species of Bread and Wine, nor any other creature, but in the blessed person of our Lord, I conclude them erroneous in their Doctrine, but not idolatrous in their practise, to be pitied as souls missed, not persecuted as malicious.

Nor can I satisfie my Conscience, since to this point the Opinion of the *Papists* is no more opposite to us, then that of the *Lutherans*, why we should freely allow Communion to *these* even of spiritual things, and in the mean while not afford *them* so much as the liberty to possesse their own temporal goods. The *Lutherans* believe our SAVIOUR to be as really in the *Eucharist*, as he was upon the Crosse, but do not adore him; the Papists both believe and adore; for my part, I should clearly, either do both, or neither, at least I shall never be

brought

brought to this partiality, to cherish the one as brethren, and persecute the other as enemies, especially when I consider the Christian proceedings of the Protestants in *New-England*, *Virginia*, and the other Plantations in the *Indies*, where we abhor to destroy the Natives, though confessedly Idolaters, but rather strive to convert them, by holding out the truth in love.

Whether Papists are inconsistent with Civil Government.

BY the next Post I received from the same hand another Letter concerning the common objection, that Papists hold many principles destructive to civil Society; wherein the Recusant protesting first solemnly, as in the sight of God and his holy Angels, to use all ingenuity and candor in his relation of the Catholike Doctrine, earnestly intreated me to give credit to his report in the matters of *Fact*, and for the right, to judge freely, as I saw cause.

we will divide (sayes he) *the main Question into two points, as it relates either to our equals, or Superiours: for the first touching Commerce and Conversation, we absolutely disclaim that scandalous opinion,* That no Faith is to be kept with Heretikes; *and flatly deny, that our engagement, promise, or contract, may lawfully be broken by our selves, or dispensed with by any Power on earth, to the prejudice of a third person, of what Religion soever; and for* equivocation, mentall reservation, *&c. I am confident, though I have not here any opportunity to look into Books, that no Generall Councel mentions either any such word, or any such thing; Schoolmen indeed frequently dispute such subtilties, which by reason of different principles and affections in Religion are easily misunderstood, and often perverted, but amongst* Catholiques *every one has liberty to deny them as he pleases, without any prejudice to Faith; and though those speculations generally deserve encouragement, yet when they arrive at a certain degree of niceness, they rather become an innocent curiosity, then profitable employment; and in such an infinity of opinions, as Catholike Writers have leisure to publish, it is impossible, but that thorough passion, unwariness, or humane frailty, some mistakes must escape, and then the unhappinesse is, that prejudiced and captious Readers applying their whole study to find faults, forget the good and wholesome notions they meet, and remember nothing but the errors.*

As to the second branch concerning our duty to Magistrates, we deny, sayes the letter, *any earthly power can dispense with our civil obedience, and acknowledge our selves bound, not onely by the Law of Nature, but by the expresse word of God,* to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsars, to be subject not only for fear, but conscience sake; *what Christian Prince or State is there in the world, whom the Subjects serve with more fidelity then the* Spaniard, French, *and* Italian, *all Catholike Dominions? and particularly in* England, *where we are some of* Paul, *and some of* Apollo, *and some of* Cephas, *what comparison is there betwixt the behaviour of* Catholikes, *towards* H. 8. Edw. 6. *and* Eliz. *and the fury of* Lutherans *and* Calvinists *in* Germany, *and indeed whersoever they are discontented; yet there is a vast difference, as to Government, between these two cases, to oppose by force the introducement of innovations, by which the peace must needs be endangered, and to attempt by force the extinguishment of an ancient Religion, whereof the people are universally in quiet and immemorial possession, the one drives others out of possession, the other maintains himself in, the one invades his neighbours rights, the other defends his own.*

How many modern experiences (the eaſieſt argument to be underſtood, and ſureſt to be relied on) clearly reſolve this queſtion; if we but conſider the union of hearts, and common intereſts of State, between the Proteſtant and Catholike Cantons *of* Switzerland, *where very many Churches ſerve by turns upon the ſame day, for the exerciſe of both Religions, dividing every Sunday morning into two parts, and aſſigning to each about three hours for their devotions; wherein they are ſo punctual to maintain equality, that if the* Proteſtants *have the firſt three houres one morning, next week they are to have the laſt; and this they continually practiſe, without interfering or offending one another.*

To this ſo pregnant example (ſufficient of it ſelf to cleare the conſiſtency of thoſe two Religions) I ſhall further adde their faire comportment one towards another, in many Provinces and Free-towns in Germany; *but moſt remarkable is their friendly and peaceable living together in* Holland, *even during ſo long and dangerous wars with* Spain; Spain *the chief protector of the Catholike faith,* Spain *the moſt zealous propagator of the Pontificial authority; to whoſe dominion if the United-Provinces ſhould again return, certainly the Catholikes there might prudently promiſe to themſelves all poſſible advantages; yet notwithſtanding ſo great occaſion of jealouſie, the* States *(then whom none are more vigilant over their true Intereſt) have not only with ſecurity, but exceeding benefit to their Common-wealth, tolerated the* Catholikes *of quiet converſation, to live freely amongſt them. And on the other ſide the* Catholikes, *in gratitude for ſo favourable a treating, have exactly correſponded to the mercy of their Magiſtrates, with a moſt conſtant, ſincere, and faithfull obedience.*

To none of theſe ſuſpitions are the Recuſants *of* England *in the leaſt meaſure obnoxious, becauſe whatever change of Government can happen, they muſt expect but a milder degree of diſaffection towards them, at moſt a ſufferance, no encouragement, or particular confidence; and infallibly, if the rigor of the Lawes (made upon far different motives which are now no wayes preſſing) were qualified to a temper of mercy, that the* Catholikes *might enjoy but half the Liberties to which they were born, they would be the moſt quiet and uſefull Subjects of* England, *ſince their Religion obliges them to obey the lawfull commands of their Superiors, not only for fear, but conſcience. Nor did ever the very worſt of them ſtir in any ſeditton at a time when they were admitted to but half the common rights of Engliſh-men, nor were they many that ever attempted their own reliefe by endangering their Countries peace, all the reſt ſitting quietly and patiently under the burthens which the heavy hand of thoſe times continually heapt upon them.*

Now that the crimes (though never ſo hainous) of a few diſcontented and deſperate ſpirits, ſhould be imputed to their Religion, whoſe principles expreſly condemn ſuch conſpiracies, ſeems extremely rigorous; but when to thoſe diſhonorable imputations are joyned intolerable penalties both upon our lives and eſtates, and not only againſt the then living Catholikes, but all their poſterity to this very day, ſurely it muſt needs appeare the moſt harſh and ſevere proceeding that ever was practiſed in the world. Wherefore I ſhall cloſe this ſecond Letter with my humble prayers to the gracious Redeemer of our ſoules, that you would ceaſe to impute all our faults to our Religion, and we begin to commit no other

faults

but our Religion, ſo ſhould we happily overcome our own infirmities, and fully ſatisfie your jealouſies.

When *I* had well peruſed this Gentlemans diſcourſe, and attentively read his letters, I muſt freely confeſſe, I could not have believed that either the Papiſts had ſuffered ſo much from us, or been able to ſay ſo much for themſelves, I do not mean in order to prove the truth of their Religion, but the unreaſonableneſſe of our perſecution; ſince really to my underſtanding, our jealouſies of their obedience ſeem as unneceſſary unto us, as prejudicial to them; for I am confident there is no Religion in the world, but by good Laws againſt breach of peace, and due execution of them, may be made conſiſtent with any Kingdom or Commonwealth whatſoever. Who more oppoſite in belief then *Chriſtians*, *Jewes*, and *Turks*, yet we ſee by experience that *Jews* are not inconſiſtent with the Government of *Chriſtians*, nor *Chriſtians* with that of the *Turks*, no not ſuch *Chriſtians* as are here in queſtion, *Papiſts*.

As concerning the Doctrine we charge upon them, of the Popes power over Supreme Magiſtrates, I had the fortune ſome few years ſince to meet with a paper that clearly anſwered all my difficulties, wherein were written the *negative* ſubſcriptions of many Engliſh Recuſants againſt theſe three following Propoſitions, as no part of their Faith or Religion, the Subſcribers being both in number and quality ſufficient to repreſent the whole body of them in this Nation.

1. *That the Pope or Church hath power to abſolve any perſon or perſons from their obedience to the civil and political Government eſtabliſht, or to be eſtabliſht in this Nation in civil and political affairs.*
2. *That by the command or diſpenſation of Pope or Church, it is lawful to kill, deſtroy, or do any injury to any perſon or perſons living within the Kings dominions, becauſe that ſuch a perſon or perſons are accuſed, condemned, cenſured, or excommunicated for* Error, Schiſme, *or* Hereſie.
3. *That it is lawful in it ſelf, or by diſpenſation from the Pope, to break promiſe or oath made to any of the foreſaid perſons, under pretence that they are Heretiques.*

Theſe they utterly diſclaim, and renounce as no part of their belief, profeſſing under their hands their readineſſe to abjure (if the State ſhould ſo require) the practiſe and execution of them all: which gave me ſo much the more ſatisfaction, by how much it was beſides my expectation, nor have I now any thing to ſay againſt them upon that account.

And indeed, if we conſider theſe differences between us impartially, our ſuſpitions are not only confuted, but ſhamed by our own daily experience; for we truſt *Papiſts* in all Negotiations, as indifferently as *Proteſtants*, nay even our Travellers and Merchants beyond Seas (where the *Papiſts* are Maſters) converſe and traffique ſecurely with them, and yet I never heard the leaſt complaint of any one ſingle Proteſtants being cheated by them, upon pretence of exemption or diſpenſation; and therefore ſince they practiſe not that part, which may ſometimes be profitable, I cannot think they hold to no purpoſe, that which is alwayes prejudicial.

For my small experience in the world, all the objection that ever I heard of against the credit of our *Papists*, was their being disabled by sequestrations to pay their debts, not taught by their Religion to deceive their Creditors.

If their Doctrines were so destructive to civil Society, as our accusations pretend, how comes it to pass that our fundamentall Lawes were enacted by them; who invested the Supream Authority of this Nation with so Honourable Priviledges, and yet provided so prudently for the just security of the people, against the unjust encroachments of Prerogative? from whom have all those excellent customes and Statutes of this Nation descended upon us? is it possible we should derive all the ancient Priviledges of Parliament, and Liberties of the Subject, contained in *Magna Charta*, &c. from the times their Religion governed the Land, and yet say now their Religion is inconsistent with the Government of the Land? as it is very true, that sometimes the Popes power here was abused to support a temporal interest, so it is evident to those that know History, that his mediation hath been available, both for the preventing and reconciling of our differences, as well with our neighbouring Kingdomes, as amongst our selves.

Nor is it possible that any Modell of Government should be absolutely proof against all exceptions, but in the experience of five or six hundred years some abuses will certainly happen; whence it is easie for a severe observer to gather objections enough to puzzle the most able and politique Statist in the world to answer, especially if they be managed with dexterity and eloquence amongst a half-witted and stubborn people, who neither can guide themselves, nor will be led by others, not blind enough to be ignorant; where they are, and yet too short-sighted to see whither they go; unhappy chiefly in this, that they are tender in the sense of any present evil, and wholly incapable of fore-seeing the destruction that follows their impatience.

Hear what is charitably said of the Papists in the foresaid *Examination* of the late *Synods Confession of Faith* (pag. 266.) *The Papists believe in the same God with the Protestants, even in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, though they differ in some Articles, or branches of Articles of their belief, and in their way of worship; yea some of the Papists are regenerate, conscientious, and vertuous persons.*

Wherefore (I humbly conceive) our Magistrates and Ministers ought sincerely to enquire into the truth of things; and make a conscience of judging or preaching otherwise then *secundum probata*; and not upon bare jealousies, or the blind opinion of the vulgar, condemn any free-born member of this Nation, farther then he shall be proved to be guilty: Nor do I believe it reasonable, to charge every unjustifiable action of particular *Papists*, or extravagant opinion of any private writer amongst them, upon the whole body of their Religion; The Decrees of their Councels, they professe to be the only absolute declarers of their Faith, amongst whose determinations there are faults enough, which they strive to defend; no need of imposing upon them errours, which they flatly deny; Let us lay our hands upon our owne hearts, we our selves want not our capriches and exorbitant conceits; which ought not to be imputed to the whole reformed Religion; but to the imperfection of humane Nature, easily deceived with the colour of truth, and passionately in love with its owne invention.

Besides

Besides, instead of jealousies and dangers, I cannot see but great security and advantages would accrue to this Nation, by treating in mercy all peaceable Papists; the Pope would be deprived of that specious pretext of relieving his distressed Flock; the Princes and States of that Religion, would for honour as well as conscience, upon all occasions, expresse their satisfaction to see them mercifully used, whom for their profession they account brethren, and for their sufferings, Martyrs; The *Protestants* in other Countreys would be more assured of the freedome they enjoy, and more hopefull of obtaining new encreases of their Liberty; The Papists of *England* would be bound by their own interest (the strongest obligation amongst wise men) to live peaceably and thankfully in the private exercise of their consciences, and, becoming gainers by such compassion, could not so reasonably be distrusted, as the *Prelaticall* or *Presbyterian* Party, who must needs reckon themselves no small losers, in that the reines of Authority are taken out of their hands, which they had by turns abused into meer whips for their brethren.

Of the one we have had too long experience in their *High-Commission*, especially since its power was overgrown by the conspiracy of the *Star-chamber*, a Court where Fines were imposed, not according to the quality of the offences, but of the Judges, who thought it below their honour to punish under thousands of pounds for every *Peccadillo*.

Of the other, though our tryal has been short, yet it was very smart, and lives still in the memory of *England*, which is every day refresht by the present practise of *Scotland*, where the *Kirk* has condemn'd all that differ in the least title from her humour, crying *Anathema Maranatha* upon all the Congregations of the Saints, as appeares by their *Synodical Act*, set forth in *Jan.* 1650. and sent to their brethren in *Edenburgh*, where, having first called our wayes *abominations*, and our selves a *perverse Generation*, and branded those few honest Scots, who suffered themselves to be undeceived by the reasons and civility of our Army, with the infamous name of *Apostates*, they proceed to the most bitter, malicious, and scandalous words that an inraged Scot can utter, speaking thus to their Party: *we exhort you, and by all the power over you we have in the Lord, require you, carefully to avoid all familiar converse of every degree, above all, that you beware to joyne with them* (those that adhere to the Parliament of England) *in any publike or private exercise of Religion, those who will adventure to touch pitch, may be defiled before they be aware; those who will not abstain from the Harlots house, shall not be innocent: Take heed* (dearly beloved) *of them that are led by the subtilty and depth of the Devil, and among all his instruments, we intreat you to avoid none more then these miserable Apostates of our own Nation, for we conceive none more fitted to work mischief among you then this sort of men.* And in their motives or grounds for a Fast in *June* 1651. their expressions against us are no lesse bitter; see how their zeale boyles, while they are but a kindling, while we choke the fuell in its owne smoak; how will their fury run over, when the fire shall by any successe be raised into a flame! how will they drowne the whole Countrey in an inundation of more then Antichristian slavery!

But

But becauſe I perceived by a paſſage in the Recuſants diſcourſe, that nothing lay more heavy upon them then the new Oath of *Abjuration* made by the Presbyterian Party in the beginning of the late troubles; I ſhall adventure humbly to move ſome *Quæres* thereupon, tranſcribing firſt a true Copy of the Oath it ſelfe.

I A.B. Do abjure and renounce the Popes Supremacy and Authority over the Catholike Church in general, and over my ſelf in particular; and I do believe that there is not any Tranſubſtantiation in the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, or in the Elements of Bread and Wine, after Conſecration thereof by any perſon whatſoever; & I do believe that there is no Purgatory; and that the conſecrated Hoſt, Crucifixes or Images ought not to be worſhipped, neither that any worſhip is due unto them; and I alſo believe that Salvation cannot be merited by works, and all Doctrines in affirmation of the ſaid points, I do abjure and renounce without any equivocation, mentall reſervation, or ſecret evaſion whatſoever, taking the words by me ſpoken, according to the common and uſual meaning of them. So help me God.

1. Whether this Oath do not flatly contradict the known Laws of the Land, by enforcing a free-born Engliſh-man to accuſe himſelf, with ſo ſtrong and dangerous a temptation to perjury, where the choice is only this, either forſwear your Religion, or ruine your eſtate; a ſeverity that far exceeds the tyranny of the Prelates, whoſe indignation ſtayed it ſelf upon the exteriour non-conformity, whereas this paſſes on to conſtrain the inward belief of the minde, which God (the ſearcher of all hearts) hath reſerved to himſelf; and all this, in Queſtions no waies concerning either Idolatry, or the ſecurity of the State, as Purgatory, and the Doctrine of merits; for that Conſcience that is not wide enough to ſwallow all the Oath, how great ſoever the part is that he can digeſt, it will do him no good.

2. This Oath being wholly Negative, and no Poſitive Articles eſtabliſht by the Parliament, to be propoſed to all as the touchſtone of Faith, whether it be conſcientious to oblige the Papiſt to ſwear away his own Religion, before we have provided another for him?

3. Whether it be conſcientious or reaſonable for us to enforce this Oath on the Papiſts, ſince we have many godly perſons of our own party, who will not take it, and others who will not ſwear at all: Hear what is ſaid in the *Examination* of the before-mentioned *Synodical Confeſſion*, pag. 238. *There is a greater reſtraint laid upon us now then in the Old Teſtament, Mat. 5. 34. James 5. 12. which hath made ſome to ſhun Oaths, though called to ſwear by the Magiſtrate in matters lawfull.* And again, *that it is a ſin in thoſe, who impoſe unneceſſary, ſubtil and enſnaring Oaths*, Zach. 5. 3, 4. *There is a curſe gone out againſt ſwearers, as well as againſt theeves: becauſe of needleſſe ſwearing, as well as falſe ſwearing*, a Land is made to mourn, *Jer.* 23. 10.

4. Since all theſe Negatives are not clearly ſet down in Scripture, as fundamental points of Chriſtian Faith, but deduced from paſſages, to which the Anſwers are believed as probable by them, as the arguments by us, why ſhould we ſo cruelly perſecute one another for Doctrines, that are either obſcurely revealed, or not neceſſarily enjoyned.

5. How ſhall we defend the Oath againſt this Objection, that any *Jew, Turk*

or

or *Infidel* may take it lawfully, according to their principles, nay will delight to ſwear againſt ſo many points of that Church, which (by reaſon of their confining Territories) mainly oppoſes them; nor have we any Law at all (to my knowledge) for which Jew, Turk, Heathen, or the moſt groſſe Heatheniſh idolater is ſequeſtrable, nor any penal Oath againſt the moſt extravagant blaſphemies, that a looſe wit can imagine, and a prophane tongue utter, as *Ranters*, *Anti-trinitarians*, and the like? What can be more deſtructive to the very foundation of *Chriſtianity*, then the prophane and ſcandalous blaſphemies of Mr. *Fry*, a late Member of Parliament, who publikely in print not only denies, but derides that Supreme Myſtery of *Chriſtian Religion*, the ſacred *Trinity*, calling it a *chaffe and abſurd Opinion*, *&c.* yet the mercy of the Parliament contented it ſelf with a moderate and favourable puniſhment, excluding him only from ſitting amongſt them; and if his Dignity and publique Character had not rendred him obnoxious to the crime of ſcandal, he might perhaps have remained as free from trouble, as all the reſt of his Opinion do, who never yet have ſuffered the leaſt moleſtation for the greateſt exorbitances that can be deviſed.

In particular at the Quarter-Seſſions at *Weſtminſter*, on the 24. of *June* 1651. there were five *Ranters* convented before Colonel *Baxter* and other Juſtices, and ſufficient proof, that they had maintained that one *Robins* a Glaſier *was a Prophet, and that his wife was with child of the Meſſias*, with ſuch other blaſphemous ſtuffe: but four of theſe, not then abſolutely aſſerting theſe Opinions, nor yet denying them, but evading the ſeverall queſtions demanded of them by the Bench, were diſcharged, the fifth was committed (as he well deſerved) not for his Opinions, but for calling the Juſtices Traitors, &c. On the ſame day a Gentlewoman great with child, and ſome others, were alſo convented for a ſuppoſed hearing of Maſſe, on the day commonly called *Chriſtmas-day*, 1650. at the then *French-Agents* in *Long-Acre*; and though there was no direct proof thas they were at Maſſe, but at Mattins or Prayers before Maſſe, yet Colonel *Baxter* did maintaine againſt ſome other of the Juſtices, that *Mattins* and *Maſſe* was all one; and ſo the Gentlewoman and the reſt were fined one hundred marks apeece, and ſent to priſon, according to the rigor of the Statute in that behalf formerly made: The ſeverity of which laſt proceeding, and the partiality of the firſt, needs no Comment.

Why muſt the *Papiſt* be thus ſingled out from all the reſt, and peremptorily forc'd to this hard choice, of either forfeiting his eſtate, or forſaking his conſcience? If we fear their increaſe, we overvalue their Religion; if we doubt their diſturbing us, we undervalue our own ſtrength; abundantly ſufficient are the means which God hath put into our hands, to ſecure our ſelves from a few diſarm'd Papiſts; abundantly ſufficient were this only proviſion, to exclude them from Offices of importance, and execute ſevere puniſhment upon ſuch as ſhould actually attempt any thing to the diſcompoſure of the State.

Nor can ſuch gentleneſſe and moderation towards quiet Recuſants, be juſtly accounted a toleration of them, becauſe (I conceive) that word ſignifies an abſolute equality in all civil reſpects betwixt Subjects of different judgments in Religion; elſe the preſent ſufferings of *Papiſts*, paying their two thirds, might by the ſame frowardneſſe be accuſed as a toleration, whereas the penalties indeed are altogether intolerable: Not to inflict the utmoſt ſeverity of puniſhment, is

not

not presently to be reputed an allowance of the crime: God himself suffers all the sins we commit, but approves none of them; we our selves daily permit mischiefs to avoid inconveniences, and for that reason we prohibit not *Masse* in the houses of Ambassadors, nor punish Usury, though the Statute it self 13. *Eliz.* 8. brands it with the name of Vice, and most Divines hold it a detestable sin, expressly forbidden by the Law of God.

A conscientious way of setling Religion proposed.

IN the same place where God commands children to obey their parents, he forbids parents to provoke their children, *Ephes.* 6. And where he exacts fidelity in servants, he likewise requires moderation in Masters; nay more, the Text includes even bondmen and slaves, enjoining the Masters *to forbear threatning, knowing that their Master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him:* thus clearly doth the Word of God condemn as well harshness and cruelty in Governours, as stubbornness and treachery in Subjects; so that there is also a tenderness of conscience requisite on the Magistrates part, to proceed sincerely and purely for the good of the people, that he may truly say with the Apostle, *I seek not yours, but you,* 2 Cor. 12. 1. And again vers. 17. *Did I make a gain of you, by any of them whom I sent unto you?* in which two lines we are plainly advertised of the chief danger which Superiours ought carefully to avoid, that neither themselves, nor their under-Officers make a profit of mens consciences concerning matters of Religion.

Since therefore the onely tolerable design of the Corrector in such cases is the benefit of the sufferer, it necessarily follows, that before we can with the least colour of Justice inflict a penalty upon any different profession, we ought to use all means possible to recover them to truth; and therefore our first work should be to collect a body of positive Articles, evidently contained in Gods Word, and absolutely necessary to mans salvation, it being very improper, to pen the publike form of Faith in the Negative, because my believing Christian truths makes me a Christian, and not my disbelieving the errors that oppose it, else he that believes nothing at all would be the best Christian.

In order to which collection, the most religious way is, that every one that will modestly, may safely propose and discuss those difficulties he meets with in Gods Word, and if after all possible diligencies of study, meditation and prayer, no satisfaction or union follow in any point, it is an evident sign the question is either obscure or unnecessary, and then provide for the peace of the Commonwealth, and submit the rest to the pleasure of God.

When we have agreed upon a summary of belief, according to these three conditions, *positive, evident,* and *fundamental,* (with which the *Creed,* commonly cal'd the Apostles, suits best of any I ever saw) then ought the Magistrates hold forth in the spirit of love and meekness, those so clear and important verities, and if any shall be found dissenting (which I am confident will be very few) let us follow the Apostles rule in punishing, a gentle one it is indeed, but powerfull, 2 Thes. 3. 6. *withdraw from such a one, that he may be ashamed;* and verse 15. *esteem him not an enemy, but correct him as a brother,* at worst, *rebuke him sharply,*

ſharply, Tit. 1.13. *and after the firſt and ſecond admonition reject him*, Tit. 3.10. that is, leave him to the hardneſſe of his heart: if his conſcience grow tender, it will check; if obdurate, he will ſoon break out into lewdneſſe, and then be juſtly puniſhable by the Law, as other criminal Malefactors, onely we muſt be careſull not to anticipate his condemnation before he be legally convinced of ſome actuall offence againſt the publike repoſe.

If we ſuſpect the diſaffection of any Party, as the Papiſts, let us firſt make it their intereſt to love their Country, by treating them at leaſt mercifully in it, and then we ſhall have a fair tryall of their fidelity; I doe not know one example, where, to a Prince or State that uſed them well, they have ſhown themſelves ungratefull.

And though it be the duty of every Chriſtian to love his enemy, and do good to thoſe that perſecute him, yet ſurely it is a *hard ſaying*, and the moſt ſincere profeſſors of any Religion whatſoever find difficulty enough to obſerve it; even *Proteſtants* as well as *Papiſts* know how to fall out with thoſe Magiſtrates that oppreſſe them, elſe how ſhall we excuſe the civil Wars of *France*, *Germany*, *Holland*, &c. if we have not recourſe to the harſh uſage of their Superiours; nor need we ſeek the reaſon of theſe diſorders amongſt the Articles of any Parties Religion, when by the inſtinct of Nature, not only man, but even the moſt triviall creature that ſeems to have no intereſt in the world, attends with diligence to the preſervation of it ſelf: who can blame the humble worm, that whilſt we walk fairly by, it proſtrates it ſelf before us, and lowly creeps upon the ground, if when we tread upon it, it lift its head, and ſtrive to wring it ſelf from under our cruel feet? Notable to this purpoſe is the old example of the *Privernates*, an ancient people of *Italy*, who having rebell'd againſt the Common-wealth of *Rome*, and being almoſt quite reduced by force of Armes, they diſpatch their Embaſſadors for terms of peace; the Senate ſternly ask them, *what new peace they could expect, who had ſo abſolutely infringed the old?* To which they ſtoutly anſwered, *we muſt now take ſuch conditions as you pleaſe to give; if they be moderate, you ſhall find us faithfull; if too heavy, we ſhall obſerve them only till we may ſafely break them*: Which free and generous expreſſion induced that wiſe Senate to aſſigne them their own demands. This ſo full and pregnant inſtance I humbly offer, as moſt worthy the imitation of our *Engliſh* Senate, that even to *Recuſants*, who ingage to live innocently and quietly amongſt us, ſuch reaſonable conditions of ſubſiſtence may be allowed (ſince they are equally with our ſelves born to the freedome of this Nation) as their conſciences be not violated, their ſpirits imbittered, nor humane infirmity tempted to deſpair; let us rather encourage them to come to our meetings, and freely propoſe their difficulties, which now they dare not, for fear of diſcovering thir judgements, to the ruine of their eſtates. Let us uſe the ſame gentleneſs here in *England*, that his Excellency the *Lord Generall* practiſes in *Scotland*, towards thoſe that are not only otherwiſe minded in Religion, but *contrary minded* in civil concernments, and actually in arms to maintain their oppoſition; he invites them to conferences, and himſelf with admirable temper and moderation manages the diſcourſe, allowing free liberty of reply to the adverſe party, without paſſion, bitterneſs or threarning, and though he find not the event anſwerable to his endeavours, remains at leaſt ſatisfied in his conſcience, by having given a reaſon of his actions; and whom can we better imitate, then ſo great an inſtrument of the liberty we all en-

joy? or wherein can we follow him with ſo much praiſe both of God and man, as in the mildneſſe of his ſpirit, by which he conquers more powerfully, then by the ſharpneſs of his Sword? have not the *Papiſts* underſtandings as well as we, which our Arguments may rectifie? have they not ſouls to ſave, which our charity may gain to heaven? why do we not erect a Committee to purchaſe ſouls, as we have Contractors to ſell Lands? why is there not eſtabliſht a Committee of *Salvation*, as wel as of *Indempnity*, where the Queſtions of Religion may be freely diſcuſt, and the diſtreſſes of a tender and innocent conſciences impartially relieved? if men dealt mildly, and only by the Goſpel way of perſwaſion, ſurely there would in time grow Society, Commerce, and mutual confidence, and ſo frequent opportunities of clearer information; when once all jealouſies and miſunderſtandings of one another ſhall be laid aſide, the differences amongſt Chriſtians will ſoon be reconciled, if not to an abſolute and preciſe unity of Faith and Doctrine, yet at leaſt to a bleſſed union of peace and love.

Oh how much better and more admirably divine is the gentle method of the Chriſtian, how to propagate it ſelf *in plain evidence of the ſpirit*, then the unnatural Turkiſh cruelty, of taking children from their parents! or the unworthy *Machiavilian* policy of taking the inheritance from the children! or laſtly, which is worſe then either, the barbarous Heatheniſh tyranny of ſhedding bloud, and tearing limb from limb meerly upon the account of Religion.

Nor can I find any ſatisfaction in that ſhuffling and hypocritical diſtinction, invented by the Lawyers to deceive the common people, whoſe ſimplicity and innocency they eaſily beguile, by pretending that none are executed for Religion, but for offending againſt the Laws? what can be more palpably falſe, or deviliſhly malicious then this? who does not ſee but by this rule thoſe bloudy tyrants, *Nero*, *Dioclefian*, and the reſt of the ten infamous perſecutors, muſt be canonized for good and conſcientious Juſticers, becauſe they judged according to Law? who does not ſee that by this rule thoſe glorious Martyrs, who watered the Chriſtian Faith with their precious blood, muſt be accounted Traytors, becauſe they ſuffered according to Law? nay even the curſed Jews, who crucified our bleſſed Saviour, impiouſly alledged the ſelf-ſame reaſon for themſelves, *We have a Law, and by our Law he ought to die*, John 19. 7.

Nor can I forbear to profeſſe how extremely unwelcome that ſcurvy news was to me, of one *Wright* a Jeſuite, being drawn to Tyburn as a Traytor upon a hurdle for his Religion, on the 19. of *May* 1651. becauſe I had ſo often commended the moderation of the preſent Authority, as having never ſpilt one drop of blood for Religion: and though the *Sequeſtrations* of all peaceable *Recuſants* were flatly againſt our Maximes, yet the preſſing neceſſities of the State, and their purpoſe (which I alwaies believed) of taking away all penalties upon the conſcience, after a ſhort time, when the Government ſhould be a little better ſetled, exceedingly qualified the harſhneſſe of thoſe pecuniary ſeverities; but now with grief I muſt lay down my arms, and with ſhame revoke all my arguments which I have hitherto uſed, to leſſen the injuſtice of our ſequeſtring for conſcience, and pacifie the ruines of many well-affected and religious perſons, who highly diſliked even that *ſoul-money*, as King *James* uſed to call it; wherein as I have had no ſmall ſucceſſe, ſo now I cannot with a ſafe Conſcience endeavour any more, leſt I ſhould co-operate to deceive the people; *Sequeſtrations* I confeſs did ſhrewdly crack, but this killing has broken quite in pieces all our Princi-

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ples. Againſt what have we principally fought all this while, but coercencie in Religion? For what have we made ſo many tedious Marches, and Declarations, but *Liberty of tender Conſciences?* Is this *to hold forth the truth in love?* is this *to inſtruct in meekneſſe* as becomes the ſervants of the Lord? let us take heed how we fall into the hands of the living God, let us alwayes remember that voice ſpeaking within us, *They ſhall be judged without mercy, that have ſhewed no mercy.*

Beſides the ſharpneſſe of the ſentence, the very Trial (as I am informed) had many ſingular and unuſual paſſages, as that nothing was proved againſt the Priſoner, but that a great many years ago he had ſaid *Maſſe* in *Flanders*, and this only by one witneſſe, and one who in open *Seſſions* profeſt a particular *pique* and quarrel towards him, alledging an old grudge as one of the reaſons why he came up out of the Country to ſwear againſt him, no diſturbance of the publike repoſe, nor ſo much as the leaſt breach of peace laid to his charge, but only his being a *Prieſt*, and in *England*: And that this was his only crime, is unqueſtionably clear by the *Miniſters* charitable offer at the *Gallows*, *That there was yet time enough for him to ſave his life, if he would renounce his Religion, and become a Proteſtant*; which he reſolutely denying, as againſt his conſcience, was firſt hanged amongſt the thieves & murderers, and then quartered as a *Traitor*; and yet both Sheriff, Jury, Judge, and every one that cooperated to the execution, all ſeriouſly profeſſe, that nothing is ſo dear to them, nothing ſo reaſonable in it ſelf, as incoercencie in matters concerning the ſalvation of our ſouls. I pray God we be not too guilty of *having a form of godlineſſe, but denying the power thereof.* I pray God theſe ſevere and ungoſpellary proceedings (eſpecially this laſt of bloud, ſo diſpleaſing to the Spectators, and unprofitable to the Authors) become not in time a prejudice to our Brethren beyond the Seas, a diſcontenting of our friends at home, and a ſcandal to all the world; for that very day of the Prieſts execution I oreheard a nimble-witted man ſay theſe words, *Since we are come to this paſſe, that we can fight againſt the Covenant for Reformation of the Kirk; ſequeſter men for Recuſants, and continue their Sequeſtrations, whether they continue their Recuſancy or no; make a cloſe peace with* Spain, *and openly hang up* Jeſuites, SIT ANIMA MEA CUM PHILOSOPHIS.

Surely it were far better to let the Papiſts for a while practiſe their kind of Chriſtianity, then upon a ſudden deprive them of the onely Religion to which they are accuſtomed, and ſo indanger the driving of them to *Atheiſme*, inſtead of reducing them to *Proteſtancy*.

Beſides, how eaſily may the like ſeverity be exerciſed againſt our ſelves, if any Power diſaffected to godlineſſe ſhould gain authority over us? It is but ſtraining the word *Recuſant* a little above the common note, it is but making our holy Conferences Treaſon by Statute; and then all the precious Saints and deareſt ſervants of the Lord, may be hang'd, drawn and quarter'd by Law, and yet at the ſame time our Executioners may profeſſe (as ſeriouſly as we now ſeem to do) Liberty of Conſcience; only they will think it reaſonable to be their own interpreters, and conſequently intend by this charming ſound of Liberty, an abſolute and uncontrollable freedom indeed, but to be enjoyed by none but themſelves. How do the Papiſts themſelves in *France* outgo us in their tender and moderate behaviour towards the Proteſtants of their country, notwithſtanding

former provocations to jealousie in the last civil wars? nay notwithstanding present provocations by our severity against all of their profession in *England*, they dispute openly and frequently together, not only the Clergy, but Tradesmen one with another; at many of which conferences I have been present in *Paris*, where every one freely defended his own Opinion, so civilly and peaceably, that I never returned from the place of those discourses, without exceeding comfort and satisfaction, thinking often with my self, it were a fashion as worthy to be transported into *England*, as any our Gallants bring from thence.

At the end of the Dispute, (which is not upon any solemn challenge, but casuall, though very often) if either party seem unsatified, his liberty is inviolably preserved, without seizing upon a penny of his estate (which there is accounted but a politique covetousnesse) or touching so much as a hair of his head, (not to speak of spilling his blood for a different opinion) which they detest as a most abominable cruelty, but with a courteous friendlinesse and mutual compassion, part in as perfect charity as they met, each hoping and praying for the others conversion; in the mean while the King allows a certain number of publike Churches to *Protestants*, and as much liberty in private for the exercise of their Consciences, as any disagreers from the common belief of the State can reasonably desire.

Nay, even the *Spanish* Inquisition (so universally abhor'd) practises all imaginable means towards the accused, to reduce his judgement to theirs, before they pronounce theirs against him, and upon conformity immediately acquit him; whereas our Conscience-sequestrations are laid on without any disputing, and hardly taken off upon never so much conforming; which very thing I have heard some *Presbyterians* object to us, though themselves made the Abjuring Oath on purpose to pinch the Papist, yet they said it was intended only for times of War, when all other waies, either of convincing by reasons, or convicting by Law were obstructed.

And, proceeding upon the same subject, they alledged divers Papists by name, who have not only gone to *Church*, but taken both the *Communion*, Oath of *Abjuration* and *Engagement*, and all this undeniably proved by sufficient Testimony, yet after solemn debate upon their Petitions in *Haberdashers-Hall* to be no longer punisht, since they were no longer guilty, the Commissioners declared *that it was not expresst in any Act or Instructions from the present Parliament, what should amount unto, or be adjudged by them to be a Conformity*; and therefore they continue the sequestrations as formerly, notwithstanding such conformity as aforesaid; In particular, on Wednesday the second of *July*, 1651. It was the case (saies my Presbyterian friend) of one *Smith*, a suspected Papist, who had Lands in the *Soke* of *Winchester* sequestred; upon his appeal at *Haberdashers-Hall*, he produced sufficient proof that he had been several Lords daies at Church, and had twice taken the Oath of *Abjuration*, but one of the *Commissioners* made answer that this was not enough, he must also take the *Communion*, otherwise must continue sequestred as a *Papist*; whereto *Smiths* Councel replied, *That if it were a mark of Papists not to have received the Communion, we are* (said he) *all Papists in our Parish, for we have had no Communion in our Church these four years*; And 'tis very probable that that very *Commissioner* who made this objection, hath not of late, and perhaps will not receive the *Communion* in manner as is prescribed by the Statute: and certainly it is a very sad case for us to force others, under

ſo great a penalty, as the Sequeſtration of their Eſtates, to do that which we will not do our ſelves: All the relief and hopes that *Smith* and others in his condition (who have both gone to Church, and taken the *Communion* and Oath of *Abjuration*) have received at the ſaid Hall, is, that the ſaid Commiſſioners have promiſed to move the Parliament, to know *what ſhall amount unto a Conformity*; and it might alſo be deſired, to know what Religion the Papiſts (in caſe they be forc'd to leave their own) ſhall conform unto, ſince we have three ſeveral Religions, that at preſent ſeem to have an equal power or influence; the Prelatical or old Proteſtant (as ſome call it) is eſtabliſht by Law; the Presbyterian carries the vogue in the Pulpit; but the Independent has the power and countenance of the State. Certainly the aboveſaid ſtrange proceedings muſt needs appear, both to all Reformed churches abroad, and to very many conſcientious people at home, as ſavouring of a deſign to make ſure of the Papiſts eſtates, whatſoever becomes of their ſouls.

And all this while we hold forth *meekneſſe*, and all this while we cry up *Liberty of Conſcience*! Is it poſſible we ſhould ſo far forget our principles, as to ſeize the eſtates of our neighbours & kindred for Religion, & at the ſame time profeſſe to venture all our own, to purchaſe freedom of Religion? is it poſſible we ſhould expoſe our own lives in ſo long and dangerous a war, to eſtabliſh and ſecure *Liberty of Conſcience*; and at the ſame inſtant of time, hang, draw, and quarter men for their Conſciences? how ſhall we anſwer at the day of judgment our ſhedding ſo much blood to deliver our Country from coercencie in matters of belief, if as ſoon as the power is in our hands, we embrue them in the blood of our Countrymen meerly for their Religion? have we ſo ſoon forgot thoſe ſharp reproofs of the Apoſtle, Rom. 2. *Behold you are called Jewes, and reſt in the Law, and make your boaſt of God, you know his will, and approve the things that are more excellent, you are confident that your ſelves are guides of the blind, and lights to them which are in darkneſſe, inſtructers of the fooliſh, and teachers of babes, who have the form of knowledge and of truth in the law; you therefore who teach another, teach you not your ſelves? you that preach a man ſhould not ſteale, do you ſteale? you that abhor idols, do you commit ſacriledge? In the day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt*, how can we anſwer that excellent and ſelf-evident precept of nature, *Do as you would be done unto*? God is not mocked; he promiſes indeed, that *the meek ſhall inherit the land*, but ſurely means not ſuch as ſeem *meek* only to inherit the Land.

Thus ſharply went on my angry *Presbyterian*, and I confeſſe I was extremely aſhamed to hear him ſay ſo much reaſon, that uſed to ſpeak nothing but paſſion, and to ſee my ſelf ſo confounded by one, that I have alwaies overcome with eaſe upon any other ſubject, and ſhould have liked far better his obſervations (which with grief I acknowledge to be too true and open to all the world) if they had come from an indifferent and unfactious ſpirit, becauſe I ſuſpect they may perhaps proceed rather from envy towards the gainers, then pitty upon the loſers: for during the violent, and therefore ſhort, dominion of the *Presbyterians*, never were more cruel torturers of the *Conſcience* then they, never a more tyrannical Tribunal then their *Jure divino Aſſembly*, and claſſical High-commiſſion; but the hand of the Lord ſtopt them in their full carier, and by woful experience they now find the truth of Gods threatnings, *If you bite and devoure one another, take heed you be not conſumed one of another*, Gal. 5. 15. Were-

Wherefore it shall be my daily prayer to our great and good God, that he would graciously inspire his servants, who now sit at the Helm, to prevent the like heavy judgements upon themselves, and seriously considering that both their allegiance to Reason, their duty to God, their Engagement to their own Principles, call so loudly upon them, they would *fulfill now* [illegible] day, and compleat the good work so happily begun, by putting the tender-conscienced and peaceable-minded people of this Nation into a condition of perfect security for matters of Religion, which cannot be effected without a general Act of Conscience-indempnity, firmly to be establisht as a fundamental and unalterable Law of the Land, for all that profess the Gospel of Christ.

FINIS.

Postscript.

SInce there is scarce one whom something in these few sheets will not please, nor very many whom something will not displease; they therefore freely submit themselves, not onely to the judgement of the Civil Magistrate, but of every civil man; and I have (according to the Order of Parliament) hereunto subscribed my name,

William Birchley.